

A
Primitive Discourse

UPON

P R A Y E R

[Price One Shilling.]



BRITISH MUSEUM

A

Primitive Dialects

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P

BRITISH MUSEUM

Primitive Discourse

UPON

P R A Y E R.

Wherein are proved, THREE Positions.

V I Z.

- I. That the ADDRESS of PRAYER is due only to GOD Supreme; and that a PLURALITY of GODS is Inconsistent with the *Christian Religion*.
- II. That the *Holy Scriptures* do not Authorise PRAYING to the SECOND and THIRD Persons in the TRINITY; neither can any such *Worship* be Inferred from *Nature* or *Reason*.
- III. That our SAVIOUR has in plain and express Terms forbid our Praying to Him; and that the *Holy Ghost* is not in any Sense stiled Go'd throughout the whole BIBLE.

By EDWARD JOHNSON, Merchant,
at St. *Christophers* in the *West-Indies*.

Search the Scriptures whether these Things are so.

Acts xvii. 11.

Who bath Ears to hear let him hear.

Matt. xiii. 43.

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Matt. x.

L O N D O N:

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PREFACE.

UCH, I hear, tho' otherwise in a great Measure unknown to me, has of late Years been written and published upon the Subject-Matter of the TRINITY, and yet, which I think to be very wonderful, all Things continue just the very same as if nothing at all had been written about it. If the Matter in Dispute was extremely difficult, or of a dubious and uncertain Nature, it would be nothing strange that no Alteration should be made; but in this Case, it is so far otherwise, as, in my Opinion to

to have no Difficulty at all in it; for, that there is *one infinitely Supreme Being* and *no more*, and that he is *most simple* and *uncompounded*, and that he has *no Equal*, and that PRAYER is due to *him*, and *him only*, are, I should think, such sure and certain Truths as to be impossible for any *Christian* concerning them to make any Doubt; and yet certain it is, that these, and chiefly these, are the Subject-Matter of this Controversy, the *one Side* affirming, the *other* denying them; but with what Colour or Pretence they should by any one be denied, I, for my Part, can no ways conceive; nay, I am so far from conceiving any such Thing, that on the contrary I think they are in a good Measure, the very Foundation and *first* Principles of all *true* Religion Natural and Revealed.

THAT therefore these Principles
should,

P R E F A C E. vii

should, especially by Protestants, in a Country too where the *Holy Scriptures* to all are open, and Learning also in so high a Degree flourishes, be disputed, is not only strange but very lamentable also, and the more so in respect of the terrible Consequences, which from the opposite Principles follow, these in my Opinion are such, as being by us held, we cannot be said either to have right Apprehensions of God or even to worship him aright.

I shall in this *Preface* say no more but refer my Reader to what I last Year published, * wherein I think the whole *Doctrine* of the *Trinity* is from the Scripture largely and fully discussed, and I hope too to the Satisfaction of all that in Truth and Purity of Religion are desirous to serve God. I have, for the Affinity that it has to this Subject, composed
this

* *A Plain Account of the TRINITY.*

VI
PART II
this DISCOURSE upon PRAYER, if
God shall be pleased to give his
Blessing with them Both, no doubt,
the Purposes for which they are
designed will be answered, which are
the *Honour of God*, and the pro-
moting *true Religion* in the World.



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DISCOURSE
UPON
PRAYER, &c.



8 there is nothing in the whole Compass of Religion of more Importance, Concern and Consequence to us than *Prayer*; so, to have a right Notion of it both in *Theory* and *Practice*, is, to be sure, above all Things necessary. To give therefore the best Light I possibly can in so essential and fundamental a Duty, is the Design and End of composing and publishing this Discourse. But before I begin, it will be necessary to shew who is the proper Object of our Prayers; this I say, I think, is first necessary to be done, tho' I know by many, this, as being a Matter, it
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will be said, that can admit of no Difficulty or possible Dispute, will be deny'd to be any ways proper to be done, because every one, it will be said, most certainly knows, without any Proof, that Prayer can be offer'd up to none but God. This, for my Part, I own is most true, but yet for the Satisfaction of some, who may be of another Opinion, I will nevertheless prove it; and in order to do it, I say, that Prayer, even by the Light of Nature, can be offer'd up to none but God; for surely in all Reason, he who made us is entitled to it, and none else; and to this the Holy Scriptures also entirely agree. In the Old Testament there is not, I affirm, one single Precept or Example against it, but for it innumerable; and in the New, 'tis certain the very same Thing is there every where taught. This is the united Voice of all the Apostles, and even of our Lord himself. *Get thee behind me,* says our Lord to the Devil when he tempted him to worship him, *for 'tis written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve:* And as if this was not enough, he has even given us a Form of Prayer prescribing the very same Thing, for says he, *when ye pray say, Our Father, &c.* Indeed this is so certain and evident a Truth as nothing can be more, whosoever therefore that denies it will no doubt be inexcusable. Besides, no one can deny it, but
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there will be such horrible and dreadful Consequences follow, as cannot be sufficiently express'd, for in denying it, we at once deny God to be the one only and true God. This I say we surely deny, for to whomsoever besides we put up our Prayers, him of Consequence we own and acknowledge to be God, and as this follows, so of course a Plurality of Gods also follows, the Consequence of which is no doubt the total Destruction of all true Religion whatsoever; for the Foundation, which is the Belief of one only Supreme Being, being destroy'd, nothing afterwards but Error, Darknes and Confusion can possibly proceed. God of Consequence in the very highest Degree will be dishonour'd, injur'd and wrong'd, and all true Religion will of course cease, become null and void, be cancell'd and abolish'd.

But tho' all this is so true as not by any one deny'd, yet there are some, and very many too, who affirm, that Prayer is due to the Son and Holy Ghost as well as to God the Father; that in a Protestant Country where the Scriptures to every one are open, and Learning in general in so high a Degree flourishes, there should be any such, is, I must confess, to me very strange, wonderful and surprizing; but yet still that there are so, is too notorious to be deny'd, but what Grounds

or Foundation they have for it I can't imagine; for from Reason, Scripture, or Nature, I am sure they can infer no such Thing; and if not, whence otherwise so dangerous, so capital and fundamental an Error can proceed I cannot conceive. I should think what has been above offer'd against it should be sufficient to satisfy any reasonable and truly pious Person, that it is utterly unlawful; but for fear it should not, I will proceed, and particularly out of the Holy Scriptures prove that Prayer is due to neither of them, which if I effectually do, our Holy Religion will in two Respects be serv'd by it, for we shall not only be set right in respect of the Object of our Prayers, but in the Unity also of the Supreme Divinity. For if I prove that Prayer is neither to the Son nor Holy Ghost due, it will, tho' no other Reason could be given against their Supreme Divinity, tho' by the way a thousand more may, yet I say this alone will be abundantly sufficient; for any one to contend for their Supreme Divinity after 'tis fully and fairly prov'd that Prayer is not due to them, would be the greatest Absurdity that possibly can be, because to the Supreme Divinity without all doubt Prayer is due, nay, to deny it would I think be no less than Blasphemy.

In respect then first of the Holy Ghost

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I affirm, that in all the whole Bible there is so far from being one single Precept for our putting up our Prayers to him, that he is no where there so much as in any Sense stiled God; he is said to be a Comforter sent by the Father and the Son to comfort us, and nothing more; in many Places of Scripture he is said to assist us in our offering up our Prayers to God the Father: St. *Paul* in particular says, that he, because we know not what we should pray for as we ought, *helpeth our Infirmities, and maketh Intercession for us with Groanings which cannot be utter'd, Romans viii. 26.* And again at the 27th Verse he is said to make *Intercession for the Saints according to the Will of God.* As these Things are said of him, tho' there was nothing more that could be said, I am sure he cannot be God Supreme, nor consequently be one to whom we may lawfully put up our Prayers. To offer them up therefore to him is beyond all possible doubt unwarrantable, highly derogatory of the Honour of God, and greatly injurious to him.

As to the Son, he is no doubt in many Places of Scripture stild God, and by virtue of his being begotten of God, he, to be sure is so, but not otherwise; neither is it possible, as he has, from Generation, a Cause of his Being, that he should be God in the
same

6 A DISCOURSE

same Sense as God the Father is: God the Father is therefore God because he has none, being wholly of, in and from himself, and self-existent. But surely betwixt these two Modes of Existence, *viz.* one with a Cause and the other without, the Difference is no less than infinite, neither will his being begotten of God, who is by Nature self-existent, any thing at all help the Matter. For tho' he may by virtue of Generation derive the same Nature that God is of, yet the self-existent Nature of God I am sure he cannot, neither is it possible, because it implies a Contradiction in Terms for God himself to communicate it to him, because any manner of Communication necessarily implies a Cause, but Self-existence can have none, for if it has, it is therefore not Self-existence. The short of the whole Matter is this: 'Tis not I affirm in the Power of God any manner of ways to produce his Equal; and because 'tis not, our Lord has so far disclaim'd his being so, that he has in plain and express Terms even forbid us to pray to him; the Place of Scripture that he has done so is in the xvi. Chapter of St. *John's* Gospel, Verses 23, 24. and is thus, *In that Day*, says he, meaning when after his Death and Resurrection he should see his sorrowful Disciples again, *ye shall ask me nothing*; and then afterwards it immediately thus follows, *Verily, verily,*
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I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name he will give it you, i. e. God will give whatsoever shall be asked of him in his Name; but of himself, *viz.* of the Son, we must ask nothing. This in short is the fixed and unalterable Rule of Prayer, *viz.* that we should always put them up to God the Father in the Son's Name: In the Son's Name I say we must put them up, but still always to God the Father, and to him only. It follows thus, *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my Name; ask, and ye shall receive*; the sense of these Words is plainly this: Hitherto, *i. e.* during my abode upon Earth with you, ye have asked nothing in my Name, but now I am departed from you, as by the Context he must now be suppos'd to be, let it ever hereafter be a constant and perpetual Rule with you to put up your Prayers to the Father in my Name, which if you do they shall be heard, accepted and granted, for whatsoever you in this manner ask, says our Lord, ye shall receive. No Words surely can be more plain and simple, positive, express'd and unexceptionable than these here mention'd are to signify to us what the Rule of Prayer is; how then it can possibly enter into the Heart of any Man to think it lawful for us to pray to him I can't imagine, for in these Words we are not only forbidden to pray to him, but from them we
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are also expressly taught how far otherwise he is concern'd in our Prayers; and that is this, viz, that they should be offer'd up to the Father in his Name, in his Name I say again they must be offer'd up, but still to the Father only,

If this will not satisfy every Man living that our Prayers cannot be lawfully offer'd up to the Son, I know not what will; but then on the other Hand, if this will convince and satisfy People, I hope so terrible, so dreadful, and so fundamental an Error will be regulated, and be no longer impos'd upon us: This, I say, if what is said is convincing, I hope will follow, and that very soon too; for in whatsoever Congregation Prayers either to the Son or Holy Ghost are put up, I don't think any Man who is perswaded of the Unlawfulness of them can with a good Conscience be present; neither do I think that any such Person, if he truly loves God, and has really and truly the Honour of God at his Heart, will, for how can he endure to see God, his best Friend, in so high a Degree dishonour'd? No Man I am sure would go into such a Society of Men where he knew a Friend whom he dearly lov'd would be dishonour'd; and if this Consideration does not alike influence us in the Case of God, 'tis to be sure for want of bearing the same Affec-

Affection to him as every Man naturally bears to his Friend; but against this it may and possibly will be said, that admitting the Prayers that are offer'd up to the Son and Holy Ghost to be unlawful, there are yet many others us'd that are no doubt lawful, and as there are, a Man has no need wholly to absent himself from the Church because of these, but join only in those that are lawful. Whether this may be lawfully done I very much doubt, because such a Practice seems to border too much upon Hypocrisy; for to Men, at least, he appears to join in the Whole; besides by our so doing, others, by our Examples, are encourag'd to persevere in an unlawful Worship; but the main Thing that lyes against this Practice, is the Offence that one who truly loves God will necessarily take at seeing God so much dishonour'd; for tho' he does not himself join in these Prayers, he cannot yet keep himself from hearing them; and that itself to such a one cannot but be very ungrateful, if not therefore, as I rather think it is downright sinful, to be present at them. But to put, if possible, this yet still in a clearer Light, let us suppose that in some religious Assembly Prayers were offer'd up to Angels and Saints as well as to God, would any good Man be present in such an Assembly, and think it lawful so to be because he join'd only in those Prayers

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that were lawful. I cannot think that any one that is really such would, and if not, neither ought he in the other Case; for as the one is unlawful so also is the other: The Difference lies only in this, *viz.* the Superiority of the Son and Holy Ghost above Angels and Saints; but that does not make an essential Difference; for as they are both unlawful, neither of them can be dispensed with. Upon the Whole this at least I am sure of, that no one that is persuaded of the Unlawfulness of praying to the Son and Holy Ghost can receive any real Satisfaction, Edification or Comfort, by his joining in a Worship where 'tis done.

If any Objection is made to what has been said, it will I think be this, *viz.* That God, considering how dear the Persons to him are to whom our Prayers are offer'd up, will not be displeas'd at it, but this is so weak an Objection that 'tis scarce worth answering; for this that we are now considering is a Matter of so high a Nature and Consequence, that God cannot, without at once giving up his very Sovereignty, dispense with it, and that to be sure he never will to any, nay, I will make bold to say he cannot.

I shall say no more upon this which concerns only the Object of our Prayers, God
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grant that what has been said may be duly and seriously consider'd by all, especially by those in Authority: I am sure the Matter at least that is here discuss'd is of that Importance and Concern in Religion as both deserves and requires it; for if what is said is true, the Lord have Mercy upon us, for surely we cannot be said to have any true Religion among us: The Foundation of all true Religion no doubt lies in putting up our Prayers to a true and proper Object, and if that is not done, as most certainly in our putting of them up to the Son and Holy Ghost it is not, our Religion in this Respect is no better than none at all; nay, I think 'tis much worse, for in none God, 'tis true, is neither honour'd nor serv'd, but in putting up our Prayers to others besides him, he is not only not honour'd, but he is also in the very highest Degree dishonour'd and even affronted.

I come now to consider my Subject itself; and in doing it I shall do these four Things, *1st*, I shall shew that all Mankind are indispensably oblig'd to put up their Prayers to Almighty God. *2^{dly}*, I shall shew what Prayer is. *3^{dly}*. I shall shew what are the Benefits and Advantages which by it will accrue to us. *Lastly*, I shall shew in what Manner and with what Qualifications on

our Part it ought to be perform'd, and then from the Whole make some Application.

The first Thing I am to do is, to shew that Prayer to Almighty God is to all Mankind an indispensable Duty; and that it is so very obvious, as one would think should want no Proof; for are we not all of us the Creatures of God and made by him? If we are, as no doubt can be made of it, what I pray can possibly oblige us to the Performance of this Duty if this will not? Or what can so much entitle God to our Prayers as this? Can any thing be so valuable to us as Being? No surely, nothing can be put in Competition with it, it being infinitely above every Thing that can be. And the Reason is most obvious, because without being put into Being, no Gratification that is by any of us enjoy'd would be possible; we could have no Sense of any thing, we could not possess any thing, or even be any thing; but this yet as great and valuable as it is we all receive from Almighty God; and as we do, can any one possibly doubt whether our Prayers are due to him? As we are dependent Creatures of Necessity we must have some Object of our Prayers, but who in Nature or Reason can that be but God that made us and gave us our Beings. But our Obligation to this Duty does not yet only arise from our having

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ing our Beings from Almighty God, but many other ways besides, for are we not, now we are in Being, constantly preserv'd by him? Do we not every Moment of our Lives live by, and wholly depend upon him? Or can we without him, or of ourselves continue in Being so much as one Moment longer? Do we not owe every thing we are and have to him? Or have we any thing at all of our own? Are we not all of us such indigent and necessitous Creatures as perpetually to stand in Need of him? Nay, and are not our Wants, which only he can supply, in a manner infinite? Any thing of all this I am sure cannot by any one be deny'd; and as it cannot, it must necessarily follow, that our Obligation to the Performance of this Duty is, besides our having our Beings from God, inexpressibly great: But this yet is not all, for if the Evils, Troubles, Dangers and Calamities, which we are all of us every Moment of our Lives liable to, are by us duly consider'd, our Obligation to the Performance of this Duty will yet still farther appear. These are so very many and various, that 'tis impossible in any Measure or Degree to recount them; but that we are so frequently delivered from them is surely no ways owing to any Foresight, Skill or Power of our own, but to God and him only. If he was only one Moment to withdraw himself from us and leave us to ourselves

selves, we should no doubt fall into Mischiefs innumerable, as then we are in ourselves altogether helpless, and owe not only our Beings but our Well-beings also to Almighty God, we are beyond all possible doubt every one of us indispensably oblig'd perpetually to pray to him.

The next Thing I am to do is to shew what Prayer is. Prayer then is an offering up our Desires to Almighty God, a laying our Wants and Grievances before him with Supplication for Redress and Relief. We do in nothing approach so near to Almighty God as in Prayer, for by it we actually discourse and hold a Communication with him, and thereby in the highest Degree that is possible for us we become acquainted with him; by Prayer we do in an especial Manner acknowledge that God is, and that he is a Rewarder of all them that diligently seek him; we do likewise by Prayer virtually acknowledge his Sovereignty over us, and that he has a rightful Title in and over us, by which we not only acknowledge that he is our Creator and we his Creatures, but also now we are in Being that we are continually upheld, protected, supported and preserv'd by him; that all our Dependance is upon him; and that all our Happiness and Good, both here in this Life and that which is to come, do, and must come

come from him and none else. All this I say is in the very act of Prayer implied, for without these Sentiments both of God and of the Duty itself it would be to no Purpose to pray, for we therefore pray to him because we believe that he is, and that he is able and willing to give us such Things as we pray for; but if we did not thus believe, it would, I say again, be to no purpose to pray at all, neither of Consequence would any such Person as we are now considering, as having no Object to pray to, ever do it. As for those who hold themselves oblig'd to the Performance of this Duty, I think it necessary in this Place concerning the Object of their Prayers, tho' I have in Part already done it, to shew how, and to whom our Prayers are to be offer'd up. The Object then of our Prayers is no doubt God and him only; but tho' so it must yet be always done in the name of his Son, and by, in, and thro' the Holy Spirit. this is undoubtedly the established Rule that we are to go by and no other; if therefore we any otherwise offer them up it will surely be erroneous; and if so, it greatly behoves us to consider of it and avoid it, because an Error in so essential and concerning a Point of Religion as this, is no less than the total Destruction of all true Religion whatsoever.

So much to shew what Prayer is: I am
next

next to shew what are the Benefits and Advantages which by it will accrue to us, and these to be sure are very many and great. In general we may expect to receive, in such a Degree I mean as is requisite for us, all manner of good Things; in particular we may expect to find Relief in all our Wants, Comfort in all our Afflictions and Troubles, Protection from Evils and Dangers, and Safety and Security in all Conditions and Circumstances of Life. We shall, in short, by our Prayers engage the mighty Power of God to help and succour us, his Wisdom to direct us, and his Goodness and Mercy to keep and preserve us. Impossible it is in any Measure or Degree to account for all the Benefits and Advantages that do by Prayer accrue to us, but if either Profit, Honour or Pleasure will be allowed to be sufficient Enducements to pray, I will undertake to prove that all and each of these, is, and are obtain'd by Prayer, that is, I will prove that Prayer is a profitable, an honourable and a pleasant Duty, and more than this, I think need not be done, to shew that the Benefits and Advantages accruing from it are very great.

The first Thing I am to do, is to shew that Prayer is a profitable Duty, and in Consequence of this, I shall farther shew that it is also our highest Interest to pray. That it is

a profitable Duty is so certain, that, beyond all possible Dispute, 'tis the only Means that we have to obtain any good Things from Almighty God; if we want, as all Mankind from the highest to the lowest perpetually do, and don't by Prayer ask, we are not entitled to receive any thing; and if God without our Prayers does give, as he very frequently does, it is not because we are any ways entitled to receive what is so given, but only because God is so abundant in Goodness; and as he is so, that itself is a powerful Argument for us to pray; for if he is so good to give to those who do not pray, what in Reason may be thought that he will not give to those who do: But more particularly to shew how profitable a Duty Prayer is, I will out of the Holy Scriptures produce some Instances and Examples in Proof of it: *Abraham*, for Instance, by it obtain'd to be Heir of the whole World, and to be call'd even the Friend of God; that the whole Congregation of the *Israelites* were not instantly destroy'd was owing, and that more than once, to the Prayer of *Moses*; *Solomon* obtain'd by it to be the wisest Man in the World; by the Prayers of *Elijah* and *Elisha*, even the Dead were restor'd to Life; mighty and powerful Armies in Favour of *Asa*, *Jehosaphat* and *Hezekiah* were by Prayer overcome, defeated and destroyed. To reckon up all the Instances

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ces and Examples that might to this Purpose out of the Holy Scripture be produc'd would be endless, I shall therefore, as that not being necessary, name no more. If these only are by us duly considered, I am sure that the Thing which I undertook by them to prove, *viz.* that Prayer is a profitable Duty, is abundantly answer'd.

But yet, if these Examples, as being very extraordinary, will not satisfy, I shall, to shew how profitable a Duty Prayer is, produce some Arguments which are common and ordinary, and those adapted to our Reason, and they shall be taken from the Nature of God. What then, let me ask, is there that we can want that God is not able, yea, and willing too to give us? In him is Power, Might, Strength, Wisdom, Goodness, and every thing else that can be desir'd or ask'd for, to render him capable to help us, and all these we are assur'd he is willing, if we pray to him, to employ for our Good; nay, we know he has even promised to do it; and to this Purpose the Holy Scriptures are full and express. *Call upon me, says God himself, in the Day of Trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me, Psalm l. 15. Again, Psalm xxxiv. 4. I sought the Lord and he heard me, and deliver'd me from all my Fears. Again, Verse 6. This poor Man cried and the*
Lord

Lord heard him, and sav'd him out of all his Troubles. Again, Verse 15. *The Eyes of the Lord are upon the Righteous, and his Ears are open to their Cry.* Again, Verse 17. *The Righteous cry, and the Lord heareth and delivereth them out of all their Troubles.* Again once more, *There is no good Thing that God will withhold from them that walk uprightly,* Psalm lxxxiv. 11. Are we then, let me ask any of us, any ways oppress'd or in Trouble, or under any other Affliction, there is in God plentiful Power and Might to help us; and not only so, but Goodness too to do it, *for the Eyes of the Lord,* as a certain Prophet told King *Asa, run too and fro throughout the whole Earth, to shew himself strong in the Behalf of them whose Heart is perfect towards him,* 2 Chron. xvi. 9. Do any of us lack Wisdom, let him ask of God and it shall be given him: In short, do we want any other good Thing, St. *James* tell us, they are to be had from God, and him only, *for every good and every perfect Gift, he says, is from above, and cometh down (by Prayer) from the Father of Lights,* James i. 17. Every Gift he means that is beneficial for us with relation to this Life, or even to the Life to come. And those of this latter sort are of the highest Consequence to us of all, for they are such as these: *viz. The Pardon of our Sins. The Favour of God. And the holy and good Spirit purifying*

fyng and sanctifying our Hearts and Minds, and thereby fitting and preparing us for everlasting Happiness, Glory and Bliss in the Life to come. Such I say, and so great Things as these; great as they are, Prayer will procure; and if so, then surely Prayer is greatly profitable indeed, which is what I undertook to prove.

That, in consequence of Prayer being profitable, it is in the highest Degree our Interest to pray, there can be no doubt; but as I have undertaken to prove it, I shall therefore do it. In order then to do it, I say, that if we do not pray we do exceedingly wrong, injure, and prejudice ourselves; for have we a Friend so mightily able and willing to help, succour, and relieve us, and supply all our Wants, and shall we not, especially as we are allow'd, nay, commanded to pray, most readily comply with it? We too who are all of us so indigent and necessitous Creatures, Creatures that subsist entirely upon God, and owe every thing that we have and enjoy to him? Shall, *I say*, such Creatures as we are have such a Privilege as this allow'd us by Almighty God, and shall we neglect or refuse to embrace it? O strange, amazing and wonderful! if our Prince, who yet in comparison of Almighty God, is of no Signification, would undertake to provide for us, how assiduously, how joyfully,

upon PRAYER

fully, constantly and readily should we attend him? This I say, with Reference to our Prince, we should all of us do; but upon Almighty God, in whose Hands our Breath is, and whose are all our Ways, and who has, upon our Prayers, in a very ample Manner engag'd to provide for us, we many of us turn our Backs; but surely if this is not prophane, impious, senseless and stupid to the highest Degree, nothing certainly can be so.

Having thus shewn that Prayer is a profitable Duty, and also that in consequence of it, 'tis our highest Interest to pray, I come in the next Place to shew, that it is an honourable Duty; and that it is attended with the highest Honour that is possible for us on this Side Heaven to receive is most certain; for what can be more so than for such poor despicable Creatures as we all, in comparison of Almighty God, are, to be admitted by Prayer into the Presence of the Infinite Majesty of Heaven and Earth, there to present ourselves before him, and by Prayer and Supplication to make known our Requests to him, invoking his Favour and powerful Protection, and committing ourselves to him. Surely I say this is an Honour infinitely above and beyond any thing that this World can bestow upon us.

I am in the last Place to shew that Prayer
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is a pleasant and delightful Duty, so delightful and pleasant as will give such Pleasure, Joy and Comfort to those who sincerely and devoutly practise it, as in Words cannot be express'd; for surely to hold Communication with God, as all good Men in Prayer do, cannot but afford such Pleasure as nothing in this World can come up to. Communication with a good and wise Man is very agreeable; but what is that in comparison of what is to be had in God, who is the Author of our Beings? If the one will in any degree influence our Hearts and Affections, in what degree may we suppose God can and will do it, especially when we are so nearly united to him as in Prayer we are? Surely he will, and frequently does by himself, as well as by the Influences and Operations of his holy and good Spirit, fill our Souls with such Joys and Raptures, as are not in Words to be uttered: And this I am confident many good People have from their own Experience found to be true. But this is not only in Experience found to be true, but Reason and Scripture too do highly concur in Confirmation of it.

As for the first of these, what can be more reasonable than to imagine that such an Intercourse as is had with God in Prayer should procure in us Delight and Pleasure?
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Do we not in the Act itself converse with him? hold as it were a Correspondence? And in so doing, does it not create an Acquaintance and a sort of Familiarity with him? Are not our Minds and Souls when we pray in a manner wrapt up in him? And is it reasonable to think that God in all this is passive only? No, surely. He that made us not only knows how but actually does convey himself to us in such ways as to make us sensible of it. He does, no doubt, by his Grace, Favour, Countenance, and Holy Spirit discover to us his Approbation of us; and that is not, nor cannot, to be sure, be done without affecting us with Delight and Pleasure to the highest Degree. Our Minds will be easy and quiet, our Consciences satisfied, and ourselves and all the Powers and Faculties of our Souls will be pleased and delighted, and that not only in the Act of Prayer itself but even after 'tis over too.

The Scriptures also concur in the same thing, as by the following Texts will appear: *The Spirit*, St. Paul says, *helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit maketh Intercession for us with Groanings that cannot be uttered*, Romans viii, 26. Again at the 27th Verse, *He that searcheth the Hearts knoweth*
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the Mind of the Spirit, because he maketh Intercession for the Saints according to the Will of God. And again, I will pour out upon the House of David, and upon the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of Grace and Supplication. What is express'd in these Texts do no doubt prove what they are brought for, viz. that in Prayer God does so communicate himself to us as to give us great Delight and Pleasure. His pouring out the Spirit of Grace and Supplication, and the Spirit making Intercession for us with Groanings that cannot be uttered, cannot surely to those who are exercised thereby, impart less than Pleasure inexpressible.

I now in the last Place come to shew in what manner, and with what Qualifications on our Part, Prayer is necessary to be performed: The principal thing that I mean with Respect of the manner of performing this Duty, is with relation to the Composition of our Prayers, viz. Whether with a Form of Words or without. Concerning which, if the Heart be right, I do not think it material which way it is done; for either way in that case will, no doubt, be acceptable; but without that, to be sure, neither will. The Truth is, whether there be a Form or no Form; or whether the Prayer be elegantly or meanly composed; nothing of this avail-

eth to the recommending of us or of our Prayers to Almighty God. It is the true and sincere Devotion of the Heart that can make us acceptable to him. It is this, and this only that gives Life, Vigour, and Acceptance to all our religious Addresses to him; without this, how elegantly and moving soever the Prayer may be composed and poured out, all is dead Matter and of no Validity in the Presence of our God; but on the contrary, if we bring this with us to his Worship, any Prayer, provided it be of sound Words, will be sufficient to make us and our Worship too acceptable to him, and obtain Mercy, Pardon and Peace from him; for it is not the Fineness of Speech, or the Elegancy of Expression, but the Sincerity of the Mind, and the true Devotion of the Heart only, that God, in all our Prayers which we offer up to him, regards.

Of the Manner of performing this Duty. It may not be amiss to say something, tho' very briefly, concerning our external or bodily Behaviour. In this Respect we must, to be sure, be very circumspect to do it with all possible Reverence. Whatever would be deemed indecent or unbecoming to be done before the greatest of Men, will, no doubt, if done before God in Prayer, be so much more so, as God is greater than Man, and

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that is in so high a Degree, so as to bear no comparative Proportion at all. But besides this general Deportment, we, in particular, when we offer up our Prayers to Almighty God, should always do it kneeling, and with uplifted Hands and Eyes. Concerning the former of these, I think, tho' so much neglected, it is by all allow'd to be proper. But because the other two are by some disputed, I shall, to shew that they also ought to be done, offer some Proof. The Proofs that I shall bring will not be taken from Precept but from Example only; -but those, by the way, of so high a Nature as not to be inferior even to an express Precept: Concerning the former of these, what is of *Moses* recorded of the Battle fought betwixt *Israel* and *Amaleck*, is very observable, *for when in Prayer he lifted up his Hand*, it is said, *Israel prevailed, but when he let it down Amaleck prevailed*, Exodus xvii. 11. As for the lifting up of the Eyes in Prayer, we have for our Imitation no less Example than our Lord himself, who never in Prayer address'd himself to God but with uplifted Eyes; before eating it is expressly said that he always did so, and particularly in that remarkable Prayer of his, which is recorded in the 17th Chapter of *St. John's* Gospel, it is expressly said, that he did it with lifting up his Eyes to Heaven. I could in Favour of both these produce more
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Examples, but these are so very considerable, that I hold it to be altogether needless.

So much for the Manner of putting up our Prayers to Almighty God. The next Thing that I am to do, is to shew what Qualifications and Dispositions of Mind, in performing this Duty, are on our Parts necessary; and these no doubt are very many: But four only, as absolutely necessary, I shall mention, and they are these following: We must pray in Faith, in Humility, with Fervency, and with pure Hearts and Minds.

We must in the first Place pray in Faith, *for without Faith it is impossible*, as the Apostle St. Paul says, *to please God*; for as he goes on, *he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. If therefore, of this we are not fully persuaded, we cannot be said to have Faith; neither, if we expect to receive any Benefit by our Prayers, must our Faith be languid, weak or diffident, but on the contrary it must be vigorous and strong, it must be such as to put us upon Action, such as will fill our Minds with an awful Reverence of God, such as will make us tremble to offend him, and careful to please him, it must, in short, be such a Faith as fully to persuade us that he not only hears our Prayers, and

that he is also able to give us what we ask, but that too that he actually will do it. We must not, as St. *James* in this Respect says, be wavering in our Faith, for *he that wavereth is like a Wave of the Sea driven with the Wind and tossed; but let not, as he further adds, such a one as this think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord; no, God will only give to them who so stedfastly and firmly believe in him, as that all their Hopes, Trust and Confidence are in him, nothing wavering or doubting of either his Truth in promising, or his Power and Goodness in performing what he has promis'd; and to this Purpose our holy and blessed Redeemer says, Whatsoever Things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall have them.*

We must, in the next Place, pray in Humility; that is, we must in Prayer come before God in the most prostrate Manner both of Soul and Body we are able, in a deep Sense of our own Meanness and Unworthiness, and with awful and reverential Apprehensions of the infinite Majesty of God: Indeed, the Distance betwixt God and Man is so great, that if it was duly consider'd, it would be impossible for any of us to be wanting herein, for what is any Man, or even all Men, put them all together, in comparison of that mighty

mighty Being who fills Heaven and Earth with his Presence; that, as Maker of all Things has all Things in his Hand, and accordingly orders and disposes all Things as he pleases, inſomuch as without him not only the greateſt, but even the very meanest Things and Creatures in all Nature can fall to the Ground, nay, and even the very Hairs of our Head are all by him numbered. What, I ſay, is any Thing or Creature in compariſon of a Being ſo great, amazing and wonderful as this! Surely a Worm bears a higher Proportion in Worth and Dignity to all the whole Race of Men, nay, and taking into the Account even all the Angels of Heaven too, than all theſe do to Almighty God. Well then might the holy Pſalmiſt ſay, *What is Man that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of Man that thou reſgardeſt him?* Well might the Patriarch Jacob ſay, *That I am leſs than the leaſt of all God's Mercies.* And yet notwithstanding all this, it is moſt certain that many Men are apt to forget themſelves in this Reſpect; there were, holy Job ſays in his Days, thoſe who ſaid unto God, *Depart from us, for we deſire not the Knowledge of thy Ways;* and again, *What is the Almighty that we ſhould ſerve him?* And by the Behaviour of many among ourſelves, it is well if ſome do not, at leaſt, think as irreverently of God as theſe Men openly ſaid; but ſuch, if yet any ſuch there
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are, surely betray in the highest Degree not only Profaneness and Impiety, but even Ignorance and Folly too, we cannot therefore be too careful to behave ourselves, when we pray, in the humblest Manner we possibly can, for if we do not, we can, to be sure, expect to receive no Benefit by our Prayers, for how in Reason can any one who comes before God in Prayer in a scornful and proud Manner, so much as hope to obtain any thing? No, surely he shall not, *for God scorneth the Scorners with the utmost Indignation; and as for the Proud he beboldeth them afar off: and again, he resisteth the Proud, but to the Humble, Meek and Lowly he giveth Grace.*

We must in the next Place pray with Fervency. And this to be sure, if we expect to receive any Benefit by our Prayers, we must not fail to do, for surely God does not put so small a Value upon his Gifts as to bestow them upon those who ask for them in a cold and careless Manner. No, the Things that we want are in Nature too great and valuable to be obtain'd by such a Manner of asking as this. Ask a Favour of your Prince in such a Manner, and see if he will accept' you, and if he will not, for Shame do not think that God, in comparison of whom the greatest Prince that ever was is less than a Worm, will, for such a way of asking, have any Regard to you;

you; and yet still if your Prince would accept you upon such Terms, what has he in his Power to give in comparison of what God can and will give to those who pray unto him, and even too, such is his Goodness, very frequently to those who do not? Has he Health to give you, or if he has Wealth it is none of his own, for it is the Gift of God even to himself. Can he give, supposing you had Wealth from him, any real and solid Enjoyment with it? Can he give you Content with it, without which it will do you no Good? Or can he give you Peace, Quietness or Tranquillity of Mind? Can he deliver you from any Afflictions that may befall you, or cure any Diseases incident to the Body? It is certain he neither can give nor do any of these Things; and if he can neither give nor do any of these Things, which in comparison are small, much less can he give you those that are greater, he cannot I mean, to be sure give you the Favour of God, neither can he forgive you your Sins, nor can he give you the Aids and Assistances of the holy and good Spirit, and much less still the Kingdom of Heaven, but all these Things God can give and none else, and all these great Things for asking may from him be obtain'd; but tho' so, they are not surely to be had by asking in a slight, careless and indifferent Manner; but they must, as they truly deserve, be ask'd for
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with Warmth, Fervour, Earnestness and Importunity, or we are not entitled to them, and besides all this, they must be ask'd for with the utmost Intention and Application of Mind that we are able, *the fervent Prayer of the Righteous availeth much*, saith St. James, and so in short if you would have your Prayers effectual, they must in this Manner be presented, or avail they certainly will not. I think it necessary to press this Matter as far as I can, because I fear it is not by the Generality of People considered so much as it ought to be; I will not presume to judge the Hearts of any, but as far as may be guessed by the outward Appearance, I cannot but think that we many of us fall very short of a due Performance of this Duty in this Respect. Of such as do so, I shall only say that they may as well appear not to pray at all, for certainly in effect they do not, but on the contrary God, by such a cold and careless Performance, is no better than mocked, and if I should say is slighted and even affronted, I think I should not say too much.

We must in the last Place pray with pure Hearts and Minds, for without this all the rest will signify nothing at all, the Prayers of the Wicked will be so far from availing that they are even an Abomination to God; if then we expect to have any Benefit by our
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Prayers we must to be sure above all Things take especial Care to live holy, virtuous, and good Lives; we must, as the Son of *Sirach* says, take Care to avoid all manner of Sin, and that in so high a Degree as to fly from it as from the face of a Serpent; for, as he goes on, if we come near it, it will bite us, and those Bites will be very terrible, for the Teeth of it, he says, are as the Teeth of a Lyon slaying the Souls of Men. The truth is, God is of that holy Nature that as long as we continue in Sin we can never recommend ourselves to him; it is so diametrically opposite to him that it is impossible to please him; he will not, nay, he cannot behold Sin in any one without having *that* and the Person too that lives in it in the utmost Abhorrence, Detestation and Indignation. Whatever therefore you do, take particular Care to avoid it; for if you do not, do otherwise whatever can be done it will be all lost and stand you in no Stead; and you must not only avoid all Sin in the outward Act, but you must also take especial Care not to harbour it even in your very thoughts, for, as the prophet *David* says, *If I regard iniquity, tho' in my heart only, the Lord will not bear me.* As therefore you desire or hope to receive any benefit by your Prayers, be infinitely careful not only to avoid all Manner of Sin, but also to possess yourselves with

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pure Hearts and Minds; in so doing you will assuredly recommend yourselves to God: Your Prayers then, tho' not otherwise, will be heard, for, as it follows in the next verse to the Text above cited, *God will then attend to the voice of your Prayers*, Psalm lxvi, ver. 18, 19. If any one shall think that because he is not a very notorious Sinner, but lives in the Practice of one particular Sin only, that his Prayers, as so living, will be accepted, he will surely find himself very greatly mistaken, for certainly between any one wilful and habitual Sin and Almighty God, there is such a contrariety as is absolutely impossible to be reconciled: A Man appearing before God in Prayer with a clear Conscience will pray with a holy boldness, but the other on the contrary with such diffidence as to receive no comfort by it, and this if needfully observed I am confident will by every one in experience be found to be true.

I have now gone through all that I have to say upon this Subject; all therefore that I have farther to do is, from what has been said to make some Application. Since then Prayer, as has been shewn, is of that mighty importance, so absolutely necessary and in so high a Degree beneficial to us, it surely infinitely concerns all Mankind constantly and every Day of our Lives to practise it,
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and the more because no one can totally neglect it, but he must of Consequence give up all Pretensions to all manner of Religion whatsoever: This, I say, every one that totally neglects it most certainly does; for Religion without Prayer is to be sure and without all doubt a downright contradiction, and such a one too as was never practised by any, even the most barbarous People that ever lived; for all those prayed to such as they acknowledged for their Gods, tho' many of their Gods were no better than Stocks and Stones: For any one therefore to say that he acknowledges the true God, and not pray to him, is certainly no other nor better than Pretence only, for he is so far from really doing so, that he does virtually renounce him; he, by not praying, actually, in effect, lives as without God in the World, as if he did not belong to him, as if he thought he had no Dependance upon him, or wanted nothing from him, or did not expect ever to be accountable to him for any of his Actions, and in short, as if, in his Opinion, there was no God. All this I say with respect of all those who wholly neglect this Duty, whether in Words it is by them acknowledged or not, is yet in Fact necessarily and unavoidably implied. As therefore all those who do believe there is a God would avoid so terrible a

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Consequence as what is above mentioned; and as moreover they would avoid everlasting Misery in the Life to come, it above all Things concerns them faithfully and conscientiously to perform this Duty: They should, together with all the rest of Mankind, come, as the holy Psalmist exhorts, and bow down, worship and kneel before the Lord our Maker, because he is our God, and we all of us the People of his Pasture and the Sheep of his Hand; therefore, as he farther adds, *we should enter into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise, be thankful unto him and bless his Name.*

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